



News Release

For immediate release: March 1, 2011

(11-029)

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Flu activity geographically widespread, still present in Washington

Virus will continue to circulate in Washington for several more weeks

OLYMPIA — Flu virus has been circulating in most Washington communities during the past few weeks, sometimes at increasing levels, and will likely continue to circulate throughout March. Laboratories have at times reported a rising number of positive flu tests, and more people have been seen in emergency rooms and outpatient clinics for flu symptoms.

“We don’t know how severe this flu season will be in Washington,” said Dr. Anthony Marfin, the state epidemiologist for communicable diseases. “However, we do know that each year the flu makes a lot of people miss work and school, and leads to serious illness for some people.”

Every year, flu takes thousands of lives in the United States, including around 125 children. Flu deaths have already occurred in Washington this year – a reminder of how serious flu can be.

Flu often causes fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue. People at high risk for complications of flu include those less than 5 years old but especially children younger than 2 years old, those 65 years or older, pregnant women, and those with underlying medical conditions including being severely overweight. Those at high risk for complications who have flu symptoms should contact their health care provider immediately. Antiviral medications can decrease the likelihood of complications. Treatment works best when started early. People who have flu symptoms should stay away from others, cover their coughs, and wash their hands frequently to avoid spreading the infection.

Flu is likely to circulate in Washington for several more weeks so it is still beneficial to [get the flu vaccine](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/flufacts.htm) if you haven’t yet this season. Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Some children under age 9 may need

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two doses to be fully protected – parents should check with their health care provider about how many doses their child needs.

To find an immunization clinic, call your health care provider, use the Department of Health [Flu News website](http://www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm), or call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. The [Flu Vaccine Finder](http://www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-vaccine-finder/) is also a good resource (www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-vaccine-finder/).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for *a healthy dose of information*.